

City on a Hill II Executive Summary

City on a Hill, a public high school in urban Boston, emphasizes academic achievement, citizenship, teacher leadership, and public accountability. It seeks to graduate responsible, resourceful, and respectful democratic citizens prepared to advance community, culture and commerce, and to compete in the 21st century. City on a Hill believes first, and most centrally, not just that all students can learn, but that all students *must* learn in order to address the social, economic, and political inequities of our nation. When students enter high school, they do so with a wide range of skills and abilities. While some schools will track these students according to their skill levels, City on a Hill does not. Regardless of geography, race, or socioeconomics, *all* City on a Hill students are held to the same high standards as they navigate its rigorous academic curriculum supported by the programs proven successful in helping students achieve. City on a Hill believes that the value of education is not in seat time; students must demonstrate their earned skills and knowledge in order to advance to the next grade level or graduate. City on a Hill approaches students' high school education knowing that they all can and will be proficient and college-ready.

Embedded in all that City on a Hill does is the notion that students must use the community as a place for learning, and give back to their community as much as they gain from it. Citizenship is a key component to a student's experience at City on a Hill, as CoaH not only seeks to prepare students for college, but also to prepare them to advance community, culture, and commerce, and to compete in the 21st century.

City on a Hill currently serves 280 students in grades 9-12, and is open to all students in the City of Boston. In March of 2012, City on a Hill held its lottery for the 2012-13 school year. For 90 available seats, CoaH received 880 applications illustrating the need – and demand—for additional school choice at the high school level. Boston families want their students to enroll in City on a Hill for its high academic standards and rigorous college-prep curriculum. City on a Hill seeks to satisfy this demand by opening a second campus, and during the 2011-12 school year, embarked on a campaign to gain community support of this project. Over the course of the year, approximately 50 community members volunteered at the existing CoaH, showing their support of the school as volunteer nurses, SAT prep teachers, and as evaluators of oral proficiencies. Additionally, members of City on a Hill's Executive Committee met individually with three state representatives and three Boston city councilors to discuss the need for additional charter seats and CoaH's plans to replicate. The majority of which supported the need for more seats and two directly advocated on City on a Hill's behalf. Finally, two community members serve as representatives on City on a Hill's School Council a body that supports the replication project.

City on a Hill was founded in 1995, and in the 17 years since the original charter was granted, its educational program has been refined, informed by educational research and first-hand experience. The existing City on a Hill has learned from its colleagues in urban education, as well as from its own experience in facing the educational, organizational, and political challenges of urban education, and will use what it has learned to maintain the strength of its own educational program while replicating it in CoaH II. Following a curriculum that aligns with Common Core standards and that incorporates academic achievement, active citizenship, and public service, teachers will use a wide range of instructional methods that match students' individual learning needs coupled with network-wide classroom norms monitored by the Principal. In the classroom, students will be required to demonstrate hard work in classes that focus on building higher-order thinking skills and writing across the curriculum. Students will be engaged in active citizenship through weekly Town Meeting debates, annual mock elections, school-wide service days, a civics-focused history curriculum, and a required internship for all seniors. Students will be required to exhibit their earned skills and knowledge through written and oral skill and content proficiencies in order to advance to the next grade level or to graduate.

Not only does City on a Hill seek to educate the urban youth of Massachusetts, it aims to close the achievement gap by sending its students to college. The CoaH model will provide *every* student with at least three years of individualized tutorial in groups of two or three; *all* students in their 11th and 12th

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grade years will attend a junior or senior seminar course designed to guide them through the college and financial aid application processes and transition to their college placement; and *every* student's family will receive one-on-one financial aid counseling from CoaH's college counseling staff. These strategies are designed to ensure that students not only gain and build upon the skills they need to become college-ready, but also to help them navigate the college application process and plan for the financial commitment of attending college. As a result of our carefully planned and executed programs, all of City on a Hill graduates been accepted to college. More important than boasting an impressive college acceptance rate, CoaH has proven consistently successful in student academic growth. When compared to other districts in Massachusetts on the 10th grade MCAS exam, City on a Hill excels in student growth. Of the 288 districts calculated, CoaH ranked in the top five for math for the past four years, and in the top ten for English Language Arts for three out of the last four years.

City on a Hill's Board of Trustees, leadership, and staff believe City on a Hill is well positioned to serve the urban youth of Massachusetts and provide them with a quality educational program that will prepare them to succeed in a rigorous college environment. This founding group has spent two years meeting in preparation for the effective replication of the existing school model. Additionally, an extensive search and selection process for the leader of CoaH II has been conducted, and that future leader has spent two years as the Vice Principal of the existing City on a Hill in preparation for her role as leader of CoaH II.

City on a Hill has proven itself as a provider of high quality educational programs to high school students across the city for the past 17 years. CoaH's programs demonstrate the commitment and dedication of its Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students to closing the achievement gap one student at a time. In addition, Boston families have demonstrated the need for an additional high quality, college preparatory high school option to serve their children. Of the charters approved in 2011 by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, eight were middle schools and only four were high schools. Additionally, each of those four approved high schools has a feeder middle school, leaving little opportunity for students seeking to enter a charter high school in the 9th grade. Lastly, after careful planning, the current Board of Trustees not only has the vision and commitment to open a second school, but the capacity, skills and qualifications to realize that vision.

City on a Hill hopes to answer this call for high quality educational programs by extending its existing model to additional students by opening City on a Hill II, balancing its duties to its own students with a commitment to sustained systemic change in public education.